(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether potable water will also be provided in each coach of the passenger trains; and

(e) if so, the details therof and by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), a wholly owned company of Indian Railways, has been incorporated on 27.9.1999 to upgrade, run and manage the catering and hospitality services at stations, on trains, and on other establishments of Indian Railways, or at any other locations and prescribe standards, award franchises as a regulatory authority and be a catalyst in stimulating technological upgradation in the handling, presentation, transport, packaging, and service of food and help consolidate and professionalise the catering sector—both departmental and private.

(d) and (e) IRCTC has been mandated to install Water Vending Machines at all categories of stations and on trains. All Mail/Express and Superfast trains would have at last one (1) water vending machine either in pantry car or in any other coach. Water dispensed through such units will conform to Bureau of Indian Standards(BIS) specifications set for potable water.

Gauge conversion in Southern Railway

3153. SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the extent of gauge conversion completed in Southern Railway during 2005-06; and

(b) what is the target fixed for the current year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) 86 Kilometres.

(b) 306 kms of gauge conversion is targeted for completion during 2006-07. Further, 231 Kms. of spill over sections are also planned for completion during 2006-07.